



JEB BUSH  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF FLORIDA

## Office of the Governor

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December 29, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush  
The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through: Mr. Major P. May  
Regional Director  
FEMA Region IV

Dear Mr. President:

Pursuant to Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5121 et seq. (the Stafford Act), as implemented by 44 C.F.R. § 206.36, I hereby request that you declare a *major disaster* for the State of Florida, as a result of a severe weather pattern that passed through the peninsula during the holiday weekend. The request is based on preliminary findings that the amount and type of damages of affected individuals, households, businesses, local governments, and private non-profit entities meet the criteria for Individual and Public Assistance.

The weather pattern emerged in the Gulf of Mexico during the weekend of December 22, 2006, and moved across central and northern Florida in the following days. This strong low pressure system produced significant rainfall, severe thunderstorms, and tornado activity. On December 25, 2006, the National Weather Service issued severe weather alerts and tornado warnings throughout most of the State. On the same date, the State Emergency Operations Center was activated to support State and local response efforts. A total of four F2 tornadoes touched down in Florida on Christmas Day: one F2 tornado touched down in Columbia County; two F2 tornadoes touched down in four different locations in Volusia County; and one F2 tornado touched down in Pasco County, also affecting neighboring Sumter and Lake Counties. This represents the most tornado activity in the State of Florida in a single day since the devastating central Florida tornadoes in 1998. According to the National Weather Service, severe weather outbreaks are the result of the jet stream (El Nino) over the Pacific Ocean, which, in turn, affects winter precipitation and temperature patterns across the country. El Nino weather events are notoriously difficult to predict more than a few days in advance; therefore, the State of Florida remains vulnerable to unpredictable weather.





As a result of the latest El Nino event, which produced flooding and tornadoes, I issued Executive Order 06-277 (Attachment 1) on December 26, 2006, declaring a State of Emergency for the counties of Columbia, Lake, Pasco and Volusia. The hardest hit areas were in Volusia County. Four joint damage assessment teams have been deployed to the impacted counties. Joint teams have completed assessments in Volusia, Pasco, Sumter, and Lake Counties. Local governments have reported damages for Columbia County. Since many residents in the impacted counties traveled during the holidays, our damage assessment teams believe that many residents in these affected areas are *unaware* of any damage suffered to their households or businesses. Therefore, the State does not expect reports of damages until they return home, which may be after the holidays. We anticipate that a request for supplementary Federal assistance will be forthcoming.

To date, preliminary damage assessment reports confirm damage to more than four-hundred forty-six (446) households, fifteen (15) businesses, two (2) government buildings and one (1) non-profit university in the impacted counties. Information concerning county-specific damages are as follows:

A.) VOLUSIA COUNTY:

- Eighty (80) households destroyed; sixty-one (61) with major damage; sixty-six (66) with minor damage; and one-hundred one (101) affected.
- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University reported significant damages to numerous structures, including administrative offices, airplane hangars, and aircraft. Current damage estimates are approximately \$60,000,000, of which only \$40,000,000 is expected to be covered by insurance.
- The Daytona Beach Police Department reports the loss of 10 patrol vehicles, 14 temporarily inoperable, and 200 linear feet of fencing around police headquarters destroyed. Estimated eligible damages total approximately \$850,000.

B.) LAKE COUNTY:

- Four (4) households with major damage; two (2) with minor damage; and ten (10) affected.
- Eleven (11) businesses with damage. Preliminary estimated damages are approximately \$275,000.
- One (1) government building suffered estimated damages of \$23,000.



C.) COLUMBIA COUNTY:

- Four (4) businesses suffered estimated damages of \$3,350,000.
- Eight (8) homes destroyed; nine (9) homes suffered major damage; and nine (9) homes suffered minor damage.

D.) PASCO COUNTY:

- Eight (8) households with major damage; fourteen (14) with minor damage; and seventy (70) affected.

E.) SUMTER COUNTY:

- Two (2) households destroyed and two (2) households with minor damage.

This event has been unsettling for our citizens. Many of these impacted counties suffered substantial losses during the course of the 2004 hurricane season. The two F2 tornadoes that touched down in Volusia County will, alone, create a financial hardship for residents who have yet to recover fully from the aftermath of Hurricanes Charley, Frances, and Jeanne in 2004. Many communities within Volusia County are comprised of special needs, fixed income, and elderly populations, thus, creating a greater need for assistance. Shelter operations are ongoing in Volusia County, where one F2 tornado destroyed three apartment buildings, necessitating the evacuation of 200 disaster victims from one apartment complex. It is anticipated that sheltering will become a bigger issue when many residents return home from holiday travels to discover that their household may be uninhabitable. Further damages are anticipated due to the continuing threat of El Nino-generated storms.

In Volusia County, one of the two tornadoes that touched down destroyed two senior mobile home parks (OrangeWood and Meadowlea) serving residents 55 years of age and older. An estimated 600 residents were displaced. The total elderly population (60 plus years of age) for Volusia County is estimated at 138,500, or 28% of the county population.

Preliminary assessment damage reports also reveal flood water intrusion issues to households damaged, but not destroyed in Volusia County. The National Weather Service has predicted another El Nino weather pattern to impact the State in the coming days. This weather pattern will likely produce significant precipitation, tornado activity, and warmer weather. Any home already breached by water will be at risk of mold infestation. The State will monitor this situation for any unexpected sheltering needs.

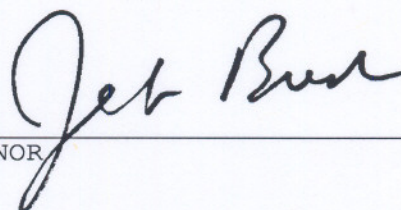


The total Preliminary Damage Assessment for all Categories of Public Assistance for Volusia County, including the City of Daytona, reveals eligible damages of \$23,390,715. Based on the 2000 census data for Florida, the statewide eligible damages per capita is \$1.40, which exceeds the established federal threshold. Volusia County, alone, totals \$47.73 per capita. *See FEMA/State Preliminary Damage Assessment* (Attachment 2) for estimated damages and population numbers. Therefore, I request all categories (A through G) of Public Assistance and specifically request Categories A and B at 100% for a consecutive 72-hour period be declared for Volusia County and related State Emergency Operations Center costs. Other counties incurred significant expenses from this outbreak of tornadoes, but are not expected to meet the county per capita threshold amount. The State of Florida also incurred significant expenses for tropical events Alberto and Ernesto in 2006 for which a declaration was not requested. For Ernesto, alone, our initial damage assessment exceeded \$15,000,000. Volusia County applicants also incurred over \$90,000,000 in eligible damages from the hurricanes of 2004.

I am also requesting Individual Assistance, including Disaster Housing, Individuals and Households Program, Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Disaster Legal Services, Crisis Counseling, Small Business Administration disaster loans for Volusia, Lake, Columbia, Pasco, and Sumter County and the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program at twenty (20) percent of the total estimated federal assistance for the entire State of Florida.

I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary to expedite recovery. I have designated W. Craig Fugate, Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency in damage assessments and may provide further information or justification on my behalf. Additional counties may be requested as additional damage assessments are made.

Sincerely,

  
GOVERNOR